

Disaster Recovery: FEMA Disaster Inspectors

Be Alert for Inspectors Pretending to be from FEMA

Sometimes scam artists will pretend to be FEMA inspectors and request a fee. Again, official FEMA inspectors never ask for money.

Inspectors carry official photo identification with their name printed on the badge, a FEMA seal and expiration date. The ID also includes a "property of the U.S." disclaimer, a return address and a bar code.

If you suspect foul play, or any other crime connected to the disaster, such as someone making fraudulent claims about damage, please contact your local police or call the Inspector General's fraud hotline at: 800-323-8608.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

SBA is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private non-profit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 800-659-2955 or online at www.sba.gov.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, economic status or retaliation. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362) or contact your State Office of Equal Rights. If suspicious of any abuse of FEMA programs, please contact the fraud hotline at 800-323-8603.

People who are not U.S. citizens--but who are in the United States legally--may be eligible for disaster assistance for damage from the Sept. 12- Oct. 6 severe storms and flooding, according to officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"We don't want any residents who might be eligible to miss out on valuable disaster assistance that could help them get back on their feet," said Federal Coordinating Officer Stephen M. DeBlasio, Sr. "When someone is in doubt, he or she should apply for assistance. FEMA will determine his or her eligibility."

Disaster assistance is available to residents and business owners in 16 Indiana counties, **Clark, Crawford, Dearborn, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Jennings, Knox, Lake, LaPorte, Lawrence, Martin, Pike, Porter, Spencer and Switzerland**. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals or qualified aliens to receive FEMA monetary assistance. Their legal status will not be jeopardized by applying for assistance.

Qualified aliens include:

- Individuals with Lawful Permanent Residency (holders of "green cards");
- Individuals with refugee or asylum status;
- Individuals whose deportation has been withheld;
- Individuals on parole in the U.S. for at least one year for humanitarian purposes;
- Individuals with conditional entry;
- Cuban or Haitian entrants; and,
- Individuals with petitions for relief based on battery or extreme cruelty by a family member.

Assistance can be given as long as someone in a household is entitled to it, and no information will be gathered regarding the status of other household members. For example, a parent or guardian who is not eligible for assistance can still apply on behalf of a minor child who is a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national or qualified alien. The guardian only certifies for the child; no information will be gathered on the adult's status.

Undocumented immigrants from a household with no one eligible for FEMA financial assistance may be eligible for programs run by state, local or voluntary agencies. They may also be eligible for short-term, non-cash aid from FEMA, such as disaster legal services and crisis counseling.

Those affected by the recent disaster can apply for assistance by calling **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** or **TTY 1-800-462-7585** for the speech- or hearing-impaired. The toll-free telephone numbers operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with multilingual operators available at all times. Individuals can also register online at www.fema.gov. Registration deadline is **Dec. 8**.

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Following are some important facts about the inspection process:

- A FEMA damage inspection is free.
- FEMA inspectors contact applicants by phone to make an appointment; they don't just show up at a property.
- Applicants must provide the inspector with a contact phone number and street address; post office boxes do not show locations.
- Applicants must provide clear directions to the damaged property.
- An inspector will try three times to contact an applicant by phone for an appointment. If no one responds by then, delays may occur.
- If applicants haven't heard from an inspector after a week to 10 days from registration, they can follow up by calling FEMA's helpline at: 800-621-FEMA (8862) and pressing the help option.
- Owners and renters must show proof of occupancy, such as a valid driver's license.
- Owners must show proof of ownership, such as property tax receipts. Some forms also will need to be signed.
- Each inspection generally takes 30 to 40 minutes.